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*Program
of the
American
Labor
Party*

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American Labor Party



Program

A NEW political alignment is taking shape in our country in response to new economic and social trends. The formation of the American Labor Party in New York State, as the permanent political instrument of all labor and progressive forces, is an answer to the urgent need for a party rooted in the common people and giving concrete political expression to their aspirations.

The American Labor Party will provide leadership and direction to the overwhelming majority of Americans whose interests the older parties, by their very nature, cannot adequately represent. It marks the political coming of age of vast sectors of the population: workers menaced by economic exploitation and insecurity; farmers burdened with debt; storekeepers and small businessmen victimized by an evergrowing monopolistic trend in both production and distribution; white collar workers and professional men and women whose standards of living have been seriously impaired. These are the people whom the American Labor Party represents in their struggle for economic security and a more civilized and abundant life.

Only such a party, the instrument not alone of labor in field and factory but of all liberal and progressive forces, can achieve the higher standards of living which a country so rich in productive capacity should afford its people. Only such a party can liberate the American people from poverty and insecurity, safeguard our democratic institutions, maintain our civil liberties and preserve peace. To further these objectives the American Labor Party offers the following program.

LABOR

The American Labor Party considers it vital for workers to receive a larger share of our national income. The inequality that exists today is the principal cause of the economic catastrophes that overtake us periodically, from one of which we are even now painfully recovering. To correct this condition it is essential that workers have the indisputable right to organize, to strike, and to bargain collectively. The American Labor Party pledges itself to vigorous action in support of these rights. It will strive for the fullest protection of men and women workers from starvation and overwork and from the hazards of industry, and for the complete removal of children from the possibility of exploitation by industry.

Collective Bargaining

Labor's right to organize is not yet a reality. The courts have whittled away the protection given by the National Labor Relations Act so that today millions of workers in New York State, as elsewhere, cannot exercise freely their most important civil liberty—the right to form unions. The American Labor Party advocates laws to assure and make effective labor's right to organize.

Company Unions and "Mercenaries"

Company unions and such devices as the "yellow dog" contract are used by employers to defeat legitimate labor organization. The use of arms and munitions furnished by pseudo detective agencies, the deputizing of guards supplied by these agencies, and the employment of state militia and other government forces to defeat legal and peaceable strikes all represent a perversion of government to the service of open-shop industrialists. It is essential to pass legislation outlawing company unions, prohibiting so-called detective agencies from furnishing "mercenaries", and preventing the law-enforcement power of the state from being turned into an instrument for the oppression of workers. The American Labor Party will initiate and support such legislation vigorously.

Minimum Wage

The Party pledges itself to work in harmony and cooperation with the organized labor movement for far-reaching minimum-wage laws which shall adequately meet the

needs of the millions of unorganized and unprotected workers in the state. The basic human right of decent living and working conditions for men and women and children is of paramount importance. No legal technicalities or subterfuges must be allowed to stand in the way of that paramount right.

Maximum Hours

Regulation of maximum hours, on an industry-wide basis, irrespective of state lines, is essential to protect workers from exhausting toil and to enable industry to absorb millions of unemployed. The American Labor Party pledges itself to work politically, jointly with the economic organizations of labor, for the stabilization and the progressive reduction of the number of hours in a working week, looking toward the ultimate establishment of a 30-hour week in all industry.

Workmen's Compensation

The American Labor Party will work for the enactment of laws guaranteeing the greatest degree of physical protection to the worker at his task. It pledges itself further to the principle of complete coverage for all the consequences of industrial hazards.

Child Labor

Child workers are not only pitiful victims of exploitation but their employment in industry breaks down any decent working standards. The problem is nationwide and the solution must of necessity be nationwide. The Party pledges itself to vigorous support of

the Child Labor Amendment as well as to the enactment and strict enforcement of effective state legislation.

Women Workers

We hold that there should be no distinction between male and female workers in opportunity to work and in reward for services. However, in the face of indisputable facts showing that women are exploited through low wages, long hours and bad working conditions, the American Labor Party pledges itself to work unceasingly for legislation to correct these injustices.

Employment Service

Private fee-charging employment agencies prey on the unemployed. More adequate funds and wider extension of free federal and state employment exchanges throughout the nation, coordinated with unemployment insurance systems, are needed. The Party pledges itself to work for these objectives. It recognizes also the necessity of directing special attention to the employment of those physically handicapped.

ECONOMIC SECURITY

The technical progress and productive genius of the American people should be made the basis of security and higher living standards rather than a threat to our national well-being. Those who are unemployed through no

fault of their own must be given adequate relief; the aged and incapacitated must be protected. The technique for achieving these guarantees still remains to be perfected, but the principle cannot be disputed. No American willing to do his share of the nation's work should be denied food, clothing and shelter.

Social Security

The threat of unemployment, incapacitation and old age hangs over the American worker, farmer and professional man. It menaces the small business man as well. Our nation is rich enough to afford protection to all its population against this threat. The American Labor Party is pledged to a fundamental and all-embracing program of unemployment insurance, old age pensions and other types of insurance against social insecurity. Such a program, by increasing the share of the national income that goes to those who receive too little of it today, will help to stabilize our national economy and prevent the recurrence of disastrous depressions.

Relief

In the present emergency and until an effective social-security program is operative, those in want must be provided with adequate relief. Since individual states cannot cope with the problem, direct federal participation in relief efforts remains essential. The guiding purpose must be to alleviate suffering, to rehabilitate workers and farmers hit by the eco-

nomic depression. The American Labor Party will press for adequate relief that will not undermine prevailing wages, hours and working conditions.

CONSUMERS

As consumers, the American people have problems which cannot be solved without government aid. The government must make provision for decent, low-cost housing. Consumer cooperatives must be protected and encouraged as a check on rapacious monopoly. The farmer's return on his labor must be increased. The cost of public utility services must be reduced and the quality improved. Our natural resources must be protected.

Housing

Private enterprise has failed to provide people of small incomes, particularly manual and white collar workers, with decent housing. Shanty and tenement slums still disfigure our land. Physically and morally we all suffer from them. Selfish, narrow-visioned real estate manipulators are consistently blocking every national large scale effort at slum-clearance and re-housing. The community must solve this basic problem through its national and local governments. The Party pledges itself to work for the initiation by the government of enough low-cost housing projects to make possible the decent re-housing of our population at moderate cost.

Consumers Cooperatives

The American family is entitled to obtain full value for its hard earned dollars. Consumers cooperatives permit the economical purchase of goods and services and act as an effective safeguard against monopoly. The American Labor Party favors government encouragement of genuine cooperative enterprise.

Farmers

It is not the price that the farmer receives but his income which is of importance. His income depends upon the purchasing power of the workers—that is, the income of urban workers of all groups and classes. Today, as in the 1870's when the Granger movement took shape, the farmers who represent almost one-third of our populations and the city wage-earner have a common interest in a more equitable distribution of the national income. To the extent that the fraction of the population which comes between worker and farmer appropriates profits unduly, the American Labor Party holds it is a proper function of government to step in to regulate these profits and thus to protect farmers and workers.

Public Utilities

Regulation of public utilities has not afforded effective protection to the public. Public welfare demands more than regulation; it demands government ownership and operation of utilities. The mere threat of public operation has often reduced rates. Successful local

government operation of light and power plants, and the great T.V.A., have pointed the way. Public welfare demands that many other basic necessities of life, not yet so considered, be put in the public utility category. The common resources of our nation must be made available to their fullest extent to farmers and city dwellers alike. The American Labor Party pledges itself to initiate and support legislation securing to the consumer the maximum benefit from our public utilities at lowest possible cost.

Conservation of Natural Resources

The natural wealth of the nation in earth and water, in forest, field and soil and in minerals and chemicals must be conserved and utilized to benefit all the people. Exploitation of these resources for the enrichment of a few must cease.

Flood and drought have demonstrated the necessity for long-range planning to conserve the people's resources. The Party will promote all possible effort in this direction.

GOVERNMENT FOR THE PEOPLE

Government in a democracy is primarily a representative agency for ministering to the vital needs of the people. Government services for public welfare necessitate wise public spending. Taxation for this purpose is socially essential and an obligation that must be met. The proper functioning of government in

the interests of the entire people must not be paralyzed by narrow legalistic technicalities and subterfuges.

Taxation

Public expenditures must be free from waste and corruption. But the outcry against increased taxation must not blind us to the necessity for public spending in the public interest. It is essential that taxes be based on ability to pay so that they do not decrease consuming power or burden the very groups in the community whom the government seeks to aid. Wealth created by the people as a whole must be used for the general good. The Party pledges itself to the principle of taxation based on capacity to pay.

Civil Service

As the functions of government multiply, it becomes increasingly important that public servants be competent and dedicated to the service of the community. The American Labor Party favors the extension of the Merit System to every field of government service and the remuneration of public employes on a level high enough to attract the most competent.

Constitutional Amendment

Legislation on a national scale is vital in order that standards of work and life be raised to the level of the most advanced states instead of declining to the level of the most backward. The efforts of the Federal govern-

ment to deal with pressing social and economic problems are defeated by narrow judicial interpretations. Recent rulings deprive even states of their power to act for the public welfare. The Party therefore will work for such legislation and constitutional amendment as will clearly ensure the right of Congress to enact laws for the entire people of the United States.

The Judiciary

In order that the law of our nation may not be turned into a straitjacket to stifle natural growth and adjustment of the country to changing economic and social conditions, a more progressive-minded and responsive judiciary is essential. Living realities rather than the dead hand of the past should weigh in the scales of justice. The Party proposes to place upon the bench both in the lower and the higher courts men and women of wider vision and more intimate and sympathetic understanding of popular needs.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Democratic institutions are under attack throughout the world. The more reason, therefore, why the ideals of our nation—inviolable civil liberties, education and equality of opportunity for all, racial and religious tolerance, the preservation of democracy at home and its encouragement abroad—should be vigorously defended. In these ideals the American Labor Party places its

faith; for their defense, it pledges its strength. It will resist, to the utmost, anti-democratic and dictatorial systems under whatever label they may be purveyed to our people.

Education

The basic right of universal education has always had the support of American labor and progressive forces. The best traditions of American democracy are rooted in our educational system. The Party favors increased government expenditures for the public school system, the maintenance of adequate salaries for teachers, and the extension of opportunities for education among all age groups and in all regions of the state and nation.

Civil Liberties

The constitutional and traditional American rights of free speech, press and assembly, a fair jury trial and protection of the individual citizen against misuse of power by officials must be maintained against all threats. Such attacks on our Bill of Rights as the teachers' oath bills, discriminations against any class or race, and denial of the right of free discussion of public questions, must be repelled. The American Labor Party pledges itself to aggressive defense of these civil rights and their enforcement in a truly democratic spirit.

War

The American Labor Party is deeply conscious that war threats center today in those

European nations, ruled by Fascist dictatorships, where independent labor movements have been destroyed and the forces of government are brutally used to crush all expression of the popular will. The United States will scarcely be able to escape the consequences of war, no matter how remote the theatre of battle. To remove one of the major causes of war, the American Labor Party demands legislation that will eliminate the profit incentive from the arms and munitions industry. To avert war and protect the principles and institutions of free government, the American Labor Party also urges the closest cooperation among the labor movements in all free countries and participation, to the fullest extent consistent with the interests of the United States, in all constructive international efforts dedicated to the preservation of peace.

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In the regrouping of political forces now under way the establishment of a powerful labor party becomes inevitable.

On the basis of our broad program for social betterment, higher standards of living, and democratic methods of government, the American Labor Party appeals to all workers, farmers, professional men, small businessmen and others who are natural allies in the common fight against special privilege. The American Labor Party calls on these basic sections of the population to join its ranks.

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